

ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF TURKEY

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Bulletin Editors

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EDITORIAL

A new Society - Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi

It is with great pleasure that we announce the start of an important new society. The following extract is from their first Bulletin dated March 1975:

"On March 4, 1975, thirteen founding members established in Turkey Dogal Hayati Koruma Dernegi - The Society for the Protection of Wildlife - and new members are now being received. As its first project the society has selected the preservation of the endangered last nesting colony of the Bald Ibis Geronticus eremita and joins with other concerned groups, the W.W.F. and the Turkish National Park Department, who have been generously helping in this endeavour.

After a successful display in Istanbul (100,000 visitors in 30 days) a Bald Ibis exhibit of photographs, paintings and graphics was brought to two southern Turkish towns for further exhibit by Belkis and Salih Acar, Sait Sermet, and Tansu Gulpinar, founding members of the society. The exhibit was prepared by the Aoars with the help of Redhouse Press.

At the close of a four-day stay in Tarsus at the American College there, the exhibit opened in Birecik, the last nesting place of the Bald Ibis, on February 17, where it formed the centrepiece of the Bald Ibis Festival that has been revived in the town since 1972.

Celebrated each year on the day of the birds' first return to their Birecik nesting site, the Festival took place this year on February 20, and was celebrated with parades and speeches emphasising the value and importance of the endangered bird to Birecik, Turkey and the world. Talks, accompanied by slide projections, were given in Birecik schools and cinemas by Society members, and attendance and enthusiasm were great.

Representations made during the four-day stay to the Birecik municipal government and to the owner of a home directly below the nesting site resulted in promises to tear down a house-top wall that completely blocked the flight path of the birds landing on one section of the breeding ledge.

The watchman hired by the Turkish National Parks Department to protect the birds and the nesting site was urged to clear the ledge of garbage and rubble thrown over the cliff from cliff-top houses during the winter, and this was done. To increase his effectiveness and authority, an official uniform was ordered by the society for the watchman and he was outfitted with it.

The Birecik Bald Ibis Festival and the Society exhibit were covered by national radio and television news programmes and featured in several national newspapers. The exhibit will also be opened in Izmir from April 5 - 15, and in Ankara in September or October.

A further project of the Society, now in its planning stages, is a stork census across Turkey. The Society hopes to enlist large numbers of school children in all parts of the country to carry out the census under the instruction of their own teachers, whom the Society will supply with information, instructions and printed report forms. Conversations are being held with the Ministry of Education in hopes of securing help and support for the project, and with a major Turkish bank, whose emblem is the stork, will be approached for financial aid. Properly carried out, a census of this nature could provide quite accurate data over a wide and ornithologically important area; at the same time, large numbers of Turkish schoolchildren would be introduced to wildlife observation, given a first lesson in conservation, and perhaps interested in further activity and enquiry in those fields.

A number of other projects are in the early stages of discussion by Society members. Further bulletins will take them up as plans mature, and will give further information on the subjects mentioned above as well. The Society would be glad to hear from friends abroad, individuals or groups; its interim address is of the Secretary, Belkis Acar, Efram Yokusu Sokak No8 Bebek, Istanbul, Turkey."

The next report

The four-year 1970-73 report is now progressing well and will be going to the printers soon. Records for 1974/75 are now being collected.

Helping the OST

We would be very pleased to hear from anyone who would be prepared to help in the running of the O.S.T. in any way. Anyone interested is asked to write to the Secretary, c/o RSPB, The Lodge, Sandy, Beds, England.

AN AUTUMN DAY AT BIRECIK by Carl-Axel Bauer

The following account by C - A Bauer describes one day - 29 September 73 that he and a party of Swedish Ornithologists spent at Birecik :

In the early morning we witnessed a migration of some 30 Honey Buzzards Pernis apivorus, one Common Buzzard Buteo buteo and a few Marsh Harriers Circus aeruginosus over the vast undulating plains west of Birecik. All of these birds were heading SW-W, which was very interesting to see since only some 60 miles further west, at Fevsiyasa, we had witnessed a large migration of raptors, all of them heading SE-S. Apparently, the birds migrating over Birecik belonged entirely to another population, undoubtedly with a much more easterly origin.

About a dozen handsome Cream-coloured Coursers Cursorius cursor were discovered in the fields, where also a Lesser Kestrel Falco naumanni and a few Long-legged Buzzards Buteo rufinus were resident.

At Birecik the Bald Ibises Geronticus eremita had long since left the nesting places, but it was nevertheless interesting to inspect the newly made artificial nesting shelves.

A walk along the Euphrates proved to be rewarding: 3 Pied Kingfishers Ceryle rudis were fishing in the river and on the shores a small number of waders, a few Little Egrets Egretta garzetta and a White Stork Ciconia ciconia were feeding. Of the 11 different waders found, 2 Marsh Sandpipers Tringa stagnatilis were the most notable. A Little Swift Apus affinis with its somewhat bat-like flight, was suddenly discovered, and luckily it passed close to us showing its white rump and square-cut tail. Quite a few Passerines such as Short-toed and Lesser Short-toed Larks Calandrella cinerea and C. rufescens and Desert Finches Rhodopechys obsoleta continuously came down to the river to drink.

As we were walking back along the river the sun was setting, painting the rocky east side of the river in beautiful colours. In an open grove by the river we noticed some small birds just about to enter their ball-shaped nests. Though it was getting dusk it was still possible to see the male's grey head and the yellow spot on the black throat, confirming that these birds were Dead Sea Sparrows Passer moabiticus.

BULGARIAN OBSERVATIONS

We are pleased to learn of a group being formed in East Germany to co-ordinate and publish ornithological records from Bulgaria. The following request was received from Norbet Jung and Detlef Robel of Berlin :

BULGARIAN OBSERVATIONS REQUESTED

In the Balkans we find one of the most striking faunal boundaries in Europe. Bird species of different faunal types meet here, probably on account of the interweaving of a great diversity of climatic and geographic conditions.

One might point to Pied Wheatear, Short-toed Lark and Ruddy Shelduck as Turkestanian elements, Nightingale, Robin and Red Kite as European, Black-eared Wheatear, Olive-tree Warbler, Cetti's Warbler, Calandra Lark, Black-headed Bunting and Egyptian Vulture as Mediterranean and Levant Sparrowhawk and Short-toed Eagle as Indo-African elements. As a refuge in the Ice Age the region was the centre of development for a number of species, and post-glacial movements contributed further to the present-day striking diversity of species.

For these reasons research into the avifauna of Bulgaria deserves special attention. The first and only compilation was the Avifauna of Pateff (1950). The relatively few Bulgarian ornithologists are now working on a new Avifauna, which is not likely to be published for a few years yet. Support for this work in the manner suggested below is very much welcomed by the Bulgarians.

Mauersberger (1964) and Robel, Konigstedt & Muller (1972) have pointed out some gaps in our knowledge of the avifauna. As the number of bird-watchers from East Germany taking holidays in Bulgaria has increased in recent years on account of more favourable travel conditions, it is natural that one should try to co-ordinate their observations. It is a pity that nearly all the visits in the past have been to the same "rewarding" areas (Black Sea coast, Rila, Pirin and Rhodopes mountains) and the importance of some of the less spectacular observations has not been appreciated (e.g. all records of Yellowhammer and Icterine Warbler in the breeding season are of interest).

The formation of a group has therefore been suggested, and all those who might make observations in Bulgaria are invited to offer it support. The main objectives are :-

1. To make an effective contribution to a new Avifauna of Bulgaria, by encouraging the better utilisation of holiday trips.
2. To maintain close contact with Bulgarian ornithologists.
3. To support nature conservation in Bulgaria.

4. (a) The collection of the addresses of all ornithologists interested in the bird life of Bulgaria.
- (b) To collect details of all previous trips (work has already started on a map to show observer coverage).
- (c) To collect information on existing and anticipated publications.

The address to which records should be sent is : Detlef Robel,
DDR - 75 Cottbus, Thalmannstre. 23, G. D. R. from where they may
 be obtained by anyone wishing to use them.

CHECKLIST OF THE BIRDS OF THE GAMBIA

A comprehensive checklist of the birds of the Gambia is currently being prepared by Mr Jens Kirkeby and Mr Jorn Vestergaard Jensen in co-operation with the Gambian Ornithologists' Society. It is intended that this Checklist will bring together all bird records, published and unpublished, for the Gambia. Anyone having unpublished records for this area is requested to make these known to Jorn Vestergaard Jensen, Holtevej 13, DK-8000 Aarhus C., Denmark. All contributions will be fully acknowledged.

FOR SALE

Gunter Groh has a spare copy of Les Oiseaux du Proche et du Moyen Orient by Hue & Etcheopar for sale, price £20. Anyone interested please write to : Gunter Groh, 673 Neustadt/Weinstrasse, Amalienstrasse 12, West Germany.

SOME OBSERVATIONS IN 1974

These records are largely unchecked and should not be taken as authenticated. Those for Spring and Summer supplement the record in the last bulletin (No. 11 - 1974).

We would like to thank the following for providing observations :

Charles Bangham, M. T. Barnes, G.M.S. Easy, M. C. Jennings,
 Dr. Reinhard Lohmer, S. C. Madge, Dave Norman, Don Parr,
 N. Piccozi, Dave Pitman, Herbert Whittall.

Spring and Summer.

In mid-March a number of useful observations were made, but probably the most interesting was of a Goosander Mergus merganser on the 11 March 20km east of Horasan (Eastern Anatolia); an area near which breeding has been suspected in the past. Finsch's Wheatears Oenanthe finschii were taking up territories in the Aras Valley and neighbouring areas. In April a Black Woodpecker Dryocopus martius was found in the coniferous zone at Uludag. This species now appears quite regularly in this area. The only Rose-coloured Starlings Sturnus roseus were 10 in late July in the 3,000 metre peaks near Van. We know so little about the distribution of this bird in Turkey.

The late summer produced a number of extremely valuable observations; Lammergeier Gypaetus barbatus, Eagle Owl Bubo bubo, Bluethroat Luscinia svecica, Ring Ouzel Turdus torquatus in the Pontics; Desert Finches Rhodopechys obsoleta at the Seyhan Reservoir; Great Rock Nuthatch Sitta tephronota, Dead Sea Sparrow Passer moabiticus and Cinereous Bunting Emberiza cineracea in the Malatya region.

The Autumn

In late August and September Kulu Golu produced over 500 Whiteheaded Ducks Oxyura leucocephala, whilst at Hotamis 3 White-tailed Plovers Vanellus leucurus were seen.

Graham Easy and M. T. Barnes who visited Hotamis/Bataklik in October noted the drainage in this region with alarm "the fish were being netted and moved elsewhere due to pending drainage.....the villagers were hand drilling wheat right up to the waters edge on mud that hadn't felt the suns rays in their life time. Obviously they were confident that the water level would not rise this winter". During their visit to Hotamis a large number of waders were seen including 2,000 Ruff Philomachus pugnax 2,000 Spotted Redshank Tringa erythropus, 1,200 Black-tailed Godwits Limosa limosa, 135 Marsh Sandpipers Tringa stagnatilis and 750 Avocets Recurvirostra avosetta.

Other Autumn records included a probable Purple Gallinule Porphyrio porphyrio on a river near Alanya and a White-backed Woodpecker Dendrocopos leucotos nearby. An Arctic Skua Stercorarius parasiticus was watched off the Goksu Delta in late September, whilst off Tekirdag in Thrace 20 Black-throated Divers Gavia arctica were seen in October. Finally, it is pleasing to note that records of Little Swift Apus affinis are becoming more frequent, and in late September 45 were seen in Iskenderun, Sarisaki and Mersin. The apparent spread of this species would be well worth documenting.
